

Good News

NEWSLETTER OF ANANDA MARGA ACCRA REGION (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana & Togo) SPRING 2009

BURKINA FASO

New Jagrti Construction

Prior to his passing away in 2006 Dada Rudreshvarananda obtained a plot of land in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. The area, called Ouaga 2000, is a rapidly developing part of the city which will also be home to many government offices.

Dada Purusottama took up the challenge of building a new jagrti (centre for spiritual awakening) on this plot. The structure is mostly made from mud blocks with materials sourced nearby our land. This indigenous technology is more economical, ecologically sound and will keep the house both cooler and warmer as need be. Brother Jala Deva supervises the construction and made the architectural drawings.



GHANA

Renewed Pracar Work

In February a display was prepared with basic information about AM yoga and meditation practices. For three days the display was mounted at busy locations in central Accra. One to two thousand handbills were distributed. There were asana and meditation demonstrations and talks given to people who passed by.

We seldom know all the results of even our small actions. A handbill thrown by someone on the pavement was blown by the wind against a young woman's foot. When the same piece of paper touched her a second time she noticed it mentioned yoga. The woman practices asanas on her own through reading books and developed great enthusiasm for yoga. She picked up the handbill and some days later phoned to introduce herself...

She was so happy to know that a yoga society is active in Ghana and proposed a meeting to discuss the production of a yoga class for beginners on TV. She and her colleague have over ten years of experience in TV and have produced a number of very well-presented programs. Several meetings have been held. We are scheduled to film the pilot programs on 18th – 19th April.

To popularize yoga in Ghana and most of Africa requires a concerted effort. Most people consider yoga as occultism and something evil or dangerous, at odds with their religion. Mass media exposure through TV may prove to be a turning point; it is one of the most effective ways to bring yoga the acceptance it deserves.

A yoga teacher mini training is planned for August 2009. Didi Sarvajina, currently working in Nairobi, Kenya will be the trainer, assisted by Dada Pramananda.

'Factory Entering Ceremony' in Tema & Sadavrata in Kpone

Approximately 350 children were served a tasty meal of Jollof Rice and a refreshing Bissop (Hibiscus) drink in the village of Kpone, near to the Tema industrial area. The local Assemblyman and other officials were on hand as well as the children's school teachers. This was the third time Ananda Marga has done the program, each time in collaboration with and sponsored by FFF Company in Tema. The company is owned by our senior margii brother Sushil Goenkaji from India.

The mass feeding was the grand finale to the 'Factory Entering Ceremony' conducted at the newly constructed shea nut processing factory of FFF in the Tema Free Zone. Dharmacakra with one hour Kiirtan was conducted followed by a Naga Kiirtan through the entire complex – weaving in and around the processing plant, storage areas and ending in the administrative block where the Om Madhu mantra was collectively recited. Sushilji distributed gifts to all the margiis who attended.



Kiirtan in Tema



'Factory Entering'



Feeding the Children

Quarterly Social Functions

BP Accra, sister Devakii organised an outing and picnic at Krokrobinte Beach on the outskirts of Accra. About 15 margiis and 3 Acaryas enjoyed swimming, a nice lunch and a lively discussion on whether or not ghosts really exist. Such gatherings are now planned to be held quarterly.

Neo - Humanist Education Summit

The first NHE Summit in West Africa was held in Accra on March 21st. A good number of margiis in Ghana and neighboring countries are or have previously been (now retired) teachers, administrators and school inspectors. Few of them however are aware of the significant work done by Gurukula and the global NHE network. None are trained in the materials and methodologies that have recently been developed throughout the world (some are familiar with the Circle of Love).

We have an established AMSAI school (KG through Junior High) in Ejura, Ghana, a KG & Primary school in Lome, Togo and two small AMJAS KGs in Accra. Very little of NHE is utilised in these schools. Didi Ananda Lilamaya manages a highly regarded KG & Primary in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) that does much better.

The summit was convened to begin the process of:

- a) training margiis and Acaryas in the abundant wealth of NHE materials and methodologies,
- b) assisting our schools to implement NHE in practice,
- c) establishing a local structure to ensure this work is taken up and continues

Ten margiis and Acaryas attended the program. Presentations and discussions were held on basic principles of NHE and the strengths and weaknesses of the current education system. A board was formed and a national coordinator appointed (brother Krsnacaetanya from Tamale). The board will meet again on 2nd May.

Participants and board members included: Dada Shiveshvarananda, Dada Pramananda (convener), Didi Ananda Shanta, Papa Shankar, Jayaliila, Muktilal, Krsnacaetanya, Iishvara (Togo), Shiva and Pamkaj.

Ho School / Jagrti Construction

A plot of land was donated by Kamal, a senior margii in Ho unit, capital of Volta Region in eastern Ghana. The land designated for a Kindergarten and jagrti (Ananda Marga centre) and eventually a school, is located just nearby the main gate of the Ho Polytechnic, the leading tertiary institution in the region. It is an upcoming area of the city.

State operated kindergartens, while free, are overcrowded and do not deliver quality care. Private kindergartens are costly. This project aims to deliver quality education at an affordable price.

The plot measures approximately 90 x 100 feet. The plan is to begin with two classrooms, an office, kitchen, store and toilets plus two rooms for jagrti use. The vision includes additional classrooms for expansion into Primary and eventually Junior High School.

Local margiis have also pledged to contribute a share of the expenses including cement blocks, sand, stone, water and a portion of labor costs. Already the technical drawings have been approved and building permits obtained.



***Yogeshvara, Tarinii and Kamal
at the site***



A view of the school plot

Three senior local margiis are very dedicated to this project. Kamal, Yogeshvara and Kiiran are retired, experienced educationists. All have been teachers as well as administrators in schools or the Ghana Education Service. Kamal and Yogeshvara live next door to the designated plot and will personally supervise the construction. All will work to find and train suitable staff for the school once it opens. The newly established Education Board will help to introduce Neo Humanistic Education.

The total budget including a boundary wall will exceed \$35,000 - costs are high here in Africa. We are currently seeking support to begin construction of the foundation and at least one classroom. Depending on the extent of the foundation this will cost from \$5,000 to \$10,000. A complete budget has been prepared for the entire building.

AMURT Portugal has sent the first donation of Euro 1,000. The Ananda Marga Foundation in Taiwan will also make efforts to find support. We hope to begin work on the foundation in April. Much more help is required.

Daboya Community Development Project (AMURT)

Main Features / Objectives:

- Construction of weekly market centre to promote income generation
- Construction and stocking of community library to promote literacy and education
- Repair of existing school buildings
- Establishment of community development fund to promote local self-reliance
- Strengthening of citizen participation and local leadership through committees and self-management

Background

In December 2008 Dada Pramananda and sister Jaya', a student of Development Studies, visited Daboya in Northern Region, Ghana. An AMURT team visited this community a year earlier in relation to flooding, so the Chief and many residents were familiar with us. Dada and Jaya explained to the Paramount Chief (Wasiperwura) and sub-chiefs their intention to conduct a community needs assessment through a meeting with wide participation. The meeting was conducted with approximately 40 participants including women and youth who had not previously been involved in a similar process.

Participants were asked to collectively list the needs and the resources of the community. They then were asked to see how their local resources, both human and natural, can help fulfill their needs. The facilitator guided them to discriminate between wants and needs and then to prioritize a final list of needs.

A simple show of hands indicated the following three priorities: 1) to construct and establish a weekly market centre, 2) to construct and establish a community library, 3) to repair damaged school buildings.

The following day at a meeting with the Chief, sub-chiefs and elders the AMURT representatives proposed that a percentage of income generated by the market centre be dedicated to a community development fund; and that this fund supports on a priority basis the operational costs of the library project and the repair of schools. The proposal was accepted and endorsed.

Two committees were established; one for the market centre and one for the library. Two different (English speaking) sub-chiefs are the chairs of each committee. Both committees have met several times, developed policies and made decisions of basic operational aspects of their respective projects. Minutes of the original community meeting and various committee meetings are included as appendices to this proposal. Land has been designated by the Chief for both projects. In mid January, 2009 approximately 200 community members helped to clear the designated market land, which is 600 square feet.



Land clearing in Jan. 2009



Land clearing

Daboya is a small rural town in West Gonja District, Northern Region, Ghana. It lies on the bank of White Volta River approximately 40 miles from Tamale, the regional capital. The township's potential as an active hub is limited due to poor roads and lack of a bridge over the river. Canoes ferry people and goods across the river many times every day.

There are at least 30 outlying villages and small communities within the Daboya jurisdiction. Farmers, craftspeople, traders and the general population of these villages, as well as from other towns in the district, and even from Tamale will patronize the proposed market. Six other sizeable towns within a distance of two hours travel have weekly markets. Daboya aspires to complete this network through the establishment of this project.

In addition to the local people, AMURT has befriended Mr. Larry Pearlman (USA). Larry is a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer and will be in Daboya for nearly one more year. At the request of the community, he assists them to develop Ecotourism opportunities. Larry has been made a sub-chief, given the title of 'Quarterswura', attends the weekly meeting of community elders and has learned some of the local

language. He keeps contact with Dada Pramananda, AMURT's Daboya project coordinator and assists in communication with the local people.



Gabaswura & Nagbewura
Chairmen of the committees



Wasipewura (Paramount Chief)
and his interpreter



Market Lady
(Committee member)



Sister Jaya'
(AMURT volunteer)

Project Implementation

Market Centre: The committee has considered physical designs, the number of stalls and other facilities (shops, storage, toilets, etc.). Administrative and financial policies and some staffing have been decided. A commitment to financial transparency and to funding community development is included in their minutes. The budget for construction is required. Certain legalities vis a vis the District Assembly are being researched. Once the budget is completed a formal proposal will be forwarded by AMURT to potential sponsors.

Community Library: This committee has also considered building designs and prepared a floor plan. AMURT will also contact potential donors of books in USA, UK and elsewhere. The committee considered how to achieve financial self-reliance. Their initial proposal is to have a computer, printer and copy machine and eventually an internet connection to help generate income in order to pay the staff.

Repair of schools: Nagbewura, a sub-chief who also chairs the library committee works for the Ghana Education Service. He will prepare a list of schools and their needs. The market is expected to generate income for this work. Alternately, AMURT will seek sponsorship elsewhere.

AMURT will prepare the budgets; supervise the purchase of materials and the construction work.

Time Line

Detailed budgets need to be prepared for the construction of both the market centre and the library.

- Distribution of this pre-proposal: April – July, 2009
- Contact potential donors of books and equipment for library: May 2009 ongoing
- Target date to complete budgets: 1st September, 2009 *
- Distribution of full proposal: September 2009 ongoing
- Construction will commence upon receipt of donor's contributions.

* Efforts will be made to complete budgets by May and then begin distribution of the proposal.

**“Madhu Shyam”
(Sweet Green Abode)**



**Ananda Marga
Holistic Health & Lifestyle Centre
Accra, Ghana**

MG Quarters Appeal

We are seeking support to improve the physical condition of MG Quarters in Accra. Our aim is a well presented centre for yoga, meditation and natural therapies.

The existing two-storey house was built in 1994 – in time for the visit of Ac. Shraddhananda Avt. in his role as Purodha Pramukha – but was never completed. Both the house and plot are spacious with a welcoming feeling. An additional two-room structure was built into the front boundary wall in 2005 for use as a clinic & shop (massage, homeopathy, etc.). Located in a relatively affluent area of Accra, close to the University of Ghana, the centre has good potential to attract well-educated and middle class people.

To realize this potential we need to make the centre more comfortable and presentable. Funds are required for renovation and improvements (up to US\$20,000), contributions in-kind of certain equipment will also be helpful (LCD projector, yoga mats, DVD player, ambient music CDs, digital camera, etc.). A detailed budget is available on request. The priority works include proper doors, windows and a ceiling over the main hall to prevent mosquitoes from entering the house – a major deterrent for many potential participants and a health risk for Dada and the brothers. Tiling in the public toilets and wash room is also essential.

Treatments, classes and programs are offered by brother Murari at affordable rates. Yoga classes are held on a donation basis so all can participate. An organic vegetable garden with fruit trees is constantly being developed. We intend to achieve financial self-reliance through fees charged and local contributions. At this time your assistance to help us along will be deeply appreciated.

Future vision...

We plan to compile an impressive portfolio of research, testimonials, appreciation letters, certificates and similar documentation. This portfolio will be presented to the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Department of Social Welfare, etc. We will then propose to demonstrate the benefits of yoga with official support in institutions such as prisons, psychiatric hospitals, schools, etc.

Three ways you can help: share documented research and evidence of yoga’s many benefits; plan to come to Ghana as a volunteer teacher, practitioner or trainer (yoga, massage, homeopathy, or other natural therapies); contribute generously.

For information on other Ananda Marga, AMURT and AMURTEL projects in Ghana please visit the following web sites: www.amurt.net, www.amurtel.net and www.kidsworldwide.org

TOGO

Ecole Privee Neo-Humaniste

The AMSAI School at our master unit in Lome, Togo has dynamically expanded. In the past eight months Dada Tanmaya has arranged and supervised construction of four more classrooms, toilets and a water storage tank (to catch and hold rainwater). Approximately 130 children are attending.

The school requires further development. Existing classrooms are yet to be plastered and painted; ceilings and electrical wiring are not yet installed. Books and materials are lacking, most teachers have only one text book for their classroom. An office room and store room need to be built; a signboard is needed.

Support for the school has come from AMURT Italy, Foundation Emanuele Antola and from a donor in the USA.

With support from a Togolese woman now in France, brother Murari arranged construction of a traditional village-style hut with thatched roof. The space was built to hold classes twice weekly on traditional dance, music and culture, especially for the school children.



School Assembly in Lome



***Dada Tanmaya, Pavitram
(AMURT Italy) and local brothers***

If you are interested in more information or to support any of these projects please contact:

Dada Pramananda.
Ananda Marga Ghana Yoga Society
P.O. Box MP – 328
Mamprobi, Accra
GHANA

Tel: +233 21 501 370 or 21 666 746
Mobile: +233 20 8612 0043
Email: pramananda@anandamarga.net

Donations are welcome!

Bank Account:

Ananda Marga Ghana Yoga Society
Barclays Bank
High St., Accra Branch
Account No. 048 / 170 9490
SWIFTCODE: BARCGHAC

For tax deductible donations within the USA, checks can be payable and sent to:

Ananda Marga Inc.
97-38 42nd St.
Corona, NY 11638

Or to:

AMURT
2502 Lindley Terrace
Rockville, MD 20850
Tel: (301) 738 7122
Or with credit card through PAYPAL at www.amurt.net/africa